The Power of Religion Nature [illegible]

A

SERMON

PREACH'D

In the PARISH CHURCH of [illegible]

On SUNDAY *January* the 27th 175[illegible]

On Occasion of the much-lamented

DEATH

Of the RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM CONOLLY, [illegible]

MEMBER *of* PARLIAMENT

In *ENGLAND* and *IRELAND*.

By WILLIAM WEATE, *A.* [illegible] of *Laplay*, and Minister of *Stretton* and *Pelsal*, [illegible]FORDSHIRE.

Vivit post funera virtus.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

HENRY VERNON, *Esq;*

OF

Hilton, STAFFORDSHIRE.

THIS DISCOURSE

Is humbly DEDICATED,

As a TESTIMONY of the high ESTEEM;

The AUTHOR has for the approved Integrity,

And the many excellent QUALITIES,

Of that truly worthy PERSON.

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1 PETER i. 24, 25.

All Fleſh is as Graſs, and all the Glory of Man, as the Flower of Graſs. The Graſs withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the LORD endureth for ever.

THE eminent Apoſtle here cloſes this Chapter, of his firſt General Epiſtle, by ſetting before them the excellency of their ſpiritual regenerate State, compared with all other excellencies and endowments whatſoever. *All fleſh*, that is, Fleſh with all its Glory, is a fading, dying, periſhing Thing: It droops like the flower, and fades away like the graſs. Now, in a flower there are three excellencies, worthy our obſervation. Beauty, which affects the Eye; ſweetneſs which affects the Smell; and 'tis ſoft, tender, and delicate to be handled. Yet all theſe our Apoſtle paſſes by, and ſpeaks of the Flower, not as flouriſhing, but in a withering, fading condition: *The Graſs withereth, the Flower falleth away.* Hence we may obſerve that Man, when in the height of all his gaiety of Wealth and Honour, when flouriſhing with all the Ornaments of Wit and Beauty, is ever in a fading, ever in a decaying Condition. Thus he is deſcribed by the

Royal Pſalmiſt. *The days of Man are but as Graſs: For he flouriſheth as a Flower of the Field. As ſoon as the Wind goeth over it, it is gone, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more.* Pſalm ciii. 15, 16. Tho' the Flower be neither cut, nor its Branches lopt off, yet it is blaſted by a breath of Wind, or withered away by the exceſſive heat of the Sun's beams. *All Fleſh is as Graſs, and all the Glory of Man, as the Flower of the Graſs. But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* That is, the Word of GOD, the Mind of CHRIST, contained in, and revealed by the Goſpel, ſhall abide and continue for ever: Shall never be aboliſhed, never be repealed. The word of GOD is everlaſting Truth, 'tis ſo in its Nature, 'tis ſo in its Effects: Upon the regenerate, it abideth for ever, and ſo doth their Eſtate: We are again begotten by it to a newneſs of Life. The word of GOD is the incorruptible Seed, or Principle of Regeneration: 'Tis called the Word of eternal Life, becauſe it advances thoſe that love and obey it, to the enjoyment of the beatifick Viſion of the glorious Angels, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Words, thus opened, afford us theſe general Obſervations.

First, *That Man in his beſt Eſtate, is but in a languiſhing, decaying Condition, ever fading, ever dying,* Secondly,

Secondly, *For this reaſon, we ought to have frequent thoughts of our Mortality, and be more diligent while opportunity is before us, in the right performance and true diſcharge of our Duty.*

And Thirdly, In proſecution of the latter Part of the Text, (*But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever*) I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

1. *That tho' Man fade as the Flower of the Field, yet the Word of God, contain'd in, and revealed by the Goſpel; by which we are to regulate and govern our Actions, ſhall never be aboliſhed, but remain thoroughout all Generations.*

2. *That they who live agreeably thereto, ſhall be made partakers of that Crown of Glory allotted for the righteous in the kingdom of Heaven.*

Theſe things I think, plainly deducible from the Words of the Text.

And now of them in their Order.

Firſt, *I am to conſider, that Man in his beſt Eſtate, is but in a languiſhing, decaying condition; ever fading, ever dying.*

And who is there, one wou'd aſk, that needs to be argued into a belief of this? This is a truth

which falls under the meaneſt Obſervation, and is confirm'd we ſee, by daily experience. This is the common Lot of all, the Wiſe, as well as the Illiterate and Fooliſh; the High with the Low, the Rich with the Poor, are all limited within the narrow boundaries of a tranſient ſpace of Time, which has its full Period, not long after its firſt appearance in the World. *Pallida mors æquo pulſat pede pauperum tabernas Regumque turres**, Says the Poet *Horace*. That is, DEATH, without reſpect of Perſons, knocks at the rich Man's Palace, (to our inexpreſſible ſorrow and grief, we ſee) as well as the poor Man's Cottage. Even thoſe of the moſt Noble, as well as the *Lazarean birth*; Yea, *thoſe that have lived like Gods muſt dye like Men.* They that wield Sceptres, and rule Kingdoms, muſt one Day paſs that perilous Gulph. The good likewiſe, (witneſs the preſent Inſtance) together with the bad muſt dye: *Abraham is dead*; *and the Prophets are dead*; and what is become of the numerous Progeny of *Adam* himſelf? If we take a ſerious and impartial view of our ſelves, the reſtleſs and uneaſie cares which harraſs and diſtract our Minds, the numerous train of Accidents, which are daily attendants on our Perſons, they abundantly demonſtrate our fickle and inconſtant Condition. Hence it is that the wiſeſt

* HOR. ODE, 4

wiſeſt of Men very juſtly obſerves, that here is no true Peace or tranquillity of Mind, but continual warring Deſires, tumultuous Thoughts, afflicting Fears, anguiſh, and anxiety; and, without remedy perpetual diſcontent. The poor as they think, loaded with the galling Yoke of Poverty; the Rich, too often, (but far from the practice of the deceas'd) perplex'd with contriving ambitious Proj-cts; and the middle ſort, bondaged with beholding ſome others whoſe fate has been more ſucceſsful than their own. Yet the wiſdom and juſtice of Providence are eminently diſtinguiſh'd in this, that he makes what Men are apt, too apt, to eſteem their greateſt Felicity, to prove their continual Torment: For no ſooner are we raiſed from our downy Pillow, but we are ſurrounded with a multiplicity of Cares, which violently ruſh in upon us, diſturb our waking Thoughts, haunt our Steps throughout the Day, and diſcompoſe our reſt in the ſilent Night. So that here we may very fitly apply to our ſelves, what is deſcribed in general, by *Moſes*, of wicked Men: *Our Vine is of the Vine of* SODOM, *and of the Fields of* GOMORRAH: *Our Grapes are Grapes of Gall, their cluſters are bitter; Our Wine is the poyſon of Dragons, and the venom of Aſps.* Deut. xxxii. 32. 33. This is the precipitate Courſe, this is the forlorn State and Condition of Man. And indeed, were it far otherwiſe; were we to paſs a life of Happineſs here,

without

without ſorrow, anguiſh, or diſcontent, yet, how little ſolid ſatisfaction, could we really expect to enjoy! The very Thoughts of a departing Hour which we are every moment liable to, ſtrikes an immediate damp upon the Spirits, and gives an unpleaſant reliſh to the higheſt gratifications For which reaſon Man may very falſly gaze upon, and call temporal pleaſure, ſincere Happineſs, were he to manage his Chriſtian-warfare, with the exacteſt caution, and moſt ſteady ſobriety. The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of Life, and the many accidents which daily ſurround us, make thoſe advantages which Providence has given us to enjoy, liable by many unforeſeen, and ſudden Surreptions to be ſnatch'd away from us.

This cauſed the wiſe Son of *Sirach*, in a moſt pathetick Manner to deliver himſelf thus. *O! Death how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a Man that hath nothing to vex him, but hath Proſperity in all Things?* Now was Death ſet at as great a diſtance from us, as the longeſt Period human Nature would admit of, yet even ſo, we might in a Manner look upon it, as almoſt preſent, and near at Hand.

But as the Caſe is, how different how reverſe! What innumerable inſtances are there of Men, who by the Wheel of Fortune, having been ſoon advanced to the higheſt earthly Enjoyments,

joyments, have by as ſudden and ſurprizing a Change, been tumbled down to their primitive Duſt? What an unwelcome aſtoniſhment was it, to that remarkable General *Alexander* the *Great*; who, when he had conquered powerful Nations, and ſubdued mighty Kingdoms, and had amaſs'd, had propoſed to himſelf the greateſt ſatisfaction, in reigning UNIVERSAL MONARCH of the World; in the very height and top of his Enjoyment, to be ſtruck with the amazing ſpectacle and terror of Death? Never yet ſure, was there ſuch true eaſe and tranquillity of Mind vouchſafed unto Mankind, as have not had ſome obſtructions and hindrances to allay their Perfection. Or however granting that; yet that one irreſiſtible thing, of a never-failing Summons at laſt, to appear before the tremendous Majeſty of HEAVEN, ever incumbers, ever lays moſt grievous ſhackles on the Mind. The very gratifications of Senſe, even when moſt innocent and lawful, are upon this Account, as St. *Paul* obſerves, attended with *Tribulation*: But if otherwiſe, when we come to dye, are ever followed with cruel deſpair, and bitter remorſe. And theſe Things (very obvious and plain,) are not only ungrateful to us, but alſo diſcompoſe our Reſt, and help to gall and cut aſunder the thread of Life; and hurry us off the Stage before we are aware. It were Endleſs indeed, to enumerate, and take an exact Survey of all the Accidents, by which the

narrow

narrow ſpace of Life is contracted, incident to human Nature. The infirmities and diſeaſes, the dangers and misfortunes which our frail Bodies are obnoxious to; The inveterate and thralling Paſſions of the Mind, give us a reſtleſs and uneaſy Pain, and continual Feuds and Animoſities daily moleſt and trouble us. Spite, Envy, Rancour, Malice, and ſuch Diabolical, ſuch Hell born Faculties as theſe, are ever and anon ſupplanting our Happineſs, and ſhortning our Days. Theſe cauſed *Haman*, as we read, *Eſther* v. 11, 12, 13. In the very height of Pageantry and Grandeur to declare, that *neither the Glory of his Riches, nor the multitude of his Children, nor all the Things wherein the King had promoted him, nor his advancement above the Princes, and other Servants of Ahaſuerus, nor his being the only Perſon admitted to the banquet of Eſther the Queen, availed him any Thing at all, ſo long as he ſaw Mordecai the Jew*†, *ſitting at the King's Gate.* ſee Eſther v. vi. vii. Chapters. Yet in the Concluſion we find, *Mordecai* was promoted to Honour, and *Haman* was deprived of Life, by the very ſame Means, which he had intended for *Mordecai's* deſtruction and ruin.

Theſe (*viz.*) Spite, Envy, Malice, and the like, with innumerable other Things, entangle Men, we daily ſee, in Sin and Perdition: So that,

† *Mordecai* Queen *Eſther's* Guardian.

that no one is ſure of a moments Security, but ever walking in dark and ſlippery Places, and tottering upon the brink of Eternity itſelf. Thus is the Life of Man, ſo frail, ſo weak. Well therefore might the Apoſtle ſay, *All Fleſh is as Graſs, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Graſs.* And, ſays holy Job, *Man fleeth as a Shadow and continueth not.* Job xiv. 2. And again, *Life is even a vapour that appeareth for a Short time, and then vaniſheth away.* And the Royal Pſalmiſt, likewiſe complains after the ſame manner. *Behold! O Lord, thou haſt made my Days, as it were a Span long, and mine Age is even as nothing in reſpect of thee, every Man therefore is but vanity*§.

Seeing then we are no ſooner entred upon the Stage of this World, but we are violently hurried off again, how careful, how ſollicitous ought we to be, to improve our Time to the beſt Advantage; that ſo we may act our Part with Applauſe, leſt the Scene ſurprizingly draw upon us, whilſt we are fooliſhly gazing upon we know not what, or ſimply admiring the dictates of our own deluded Fancys.

Which brings me, *Secondly*, To ſhew, from the ſhortneſs, and uncertainty of Life, (all Fleſh is as

§ *Pſalm in the Office for the Dead.*

as Graſs.) *How we ought to have frequent Thoughts of our Mortality; and how diligent it behoves us to be, while Opportunity is before us, in the right Performance, and juſt diſcharge of our Duty.* And

1. Whoever looks upon himſelf as a weak dependent Creature, that bears about him the Principles of human Frailty, and a Body of Death; whoever conſiders the many Accidents he is obnoxious to, and that GOD, by the Word of his Power, may put a ſudden Period to his full-blown Glories, and even Life itſelf, much ſooner than the common Courſe of Nature; whoever truly conceives that he has no Promiſe, no Security from GOD, in whoſe Hands are the Iſſues of Life, tho' he may live to ſee the riſing of the Sun, to be aſſur'd of his continuance 'till the ſetting of the ſame; Whoever I ſay, ſeriouſly reflects upon theſe Things, what has he whereof he may boaſt or glory in himſelf? And may he not look upon the greateſt earthly Enjoyments, as ſubject to the ſame uncertainty, with his own Life; for if he expires, as he knows not how ſoon he may, even ſo to him, they all forthwith dye, and vaniſh away. How many may we ſee, who by reaſon of ſome lingering Diſorder, have been made truly ſenſible of the gradual decay of Nature, and of their nearer approaches to that dark receptacle the Grave, and even in themſelves have received

received the very Sentence of Death? Few one would imagine, in this languiſhing, declining Condition, would ever trouble themſelves with aſpiring to be Great, or ſet up their Banners for Tokens. Reflect but upon the ſwift approaches, which that irreſiſtible thing Death, is making towards you; every Day, every Hour, bringing you nearer to your latter End, and ye ſhall find that nothing will more effectually prevail againſt the Fury of an immoderate Luſt, or the Heat of an effeminate Paſſion. It will conſequently enable us to make a juſt Eſtimate of the World, and lay before us all its fictitious Pleaſures, in a fair extended Scene. Say but to our ſelves, what are all the gay glittering Ornaments of worldly Grandeur, even a Sceptre and Diadem to a dying Man, and think how variable and inconſtant they are, and it will teach us to abjure and fly, nay loath and deſpiſe them. The effectual and conſtant Senſe of our own Imperfection, will naturally prompt and enliven us to provide for Death, and a better World, and ſtrongly importune us, to ſtrive earneſtly for the high Prize of an everlaſting Inheritance. The ſerious Apprehenſions of Death haſtening upon us, will (if ought) give the Conſcience a ſudden Alarm, rouſe up the drooping Spirit, and give an immediate check to thoſe aſpiring faculties, that are ever rebelling againſt the dictates of true Reaſon, and the rules of ſupreme Wiſdom.

One, and the moſt prevalent reaſon, why Men put the evil Day far from them, and ſlight that great Salvation purchaſed for Mankind, is, becauſe they look upon Death as at an immenſe diſtance, and dream of a Life of many Years and innumerable Days. But could we ſurmount theſe wandering Thoughts, theſe lethargick Imaginations; cou'd we be made truly ſenſible, how ſmall a diſtance there is between us and Death, that it is even ready to ruſh in upon us, and that we are already ſtanding as it were upon the confines of both Worlds, we could never ſure, regardleſs of our own Happineſs, thus play upon the brink of Eternity, and dally with Deſtruction. But,

2. While opportunity is before us, we ſhould be ever cautious that we improve our Time to the beſt Advantage.

For, Conſcience, that juſt regiſter of our Actions, will, I doubt, inform moſt, if not all of us, that we have not as we ought, diſcharg'd our Duty either to GOD or Man. And tho' we lie under theſe heavy Convictions, are ſtill addicted to Procraſtination, neglecting the holy Duties of RELIGION, as tho' we did it on purpoſe to hazard our Souls, and try concluſions with GOD; as tho' the preſent, was the moſt improper Seaſon for Repentance, and our Time

was

was not in the Hands of Almighty God. But ſure the preſent is the only Time we can call our own, and therefore we ought to look upon it the moſt convenient Seaſon for doing good both to ourſelves and others.

We ſhould look upon every Moment as our laſt, and then, no doubt, we ſhou'd never fail of improving it to our beſt Advantage. Let then no opportunity ſlip, ſince the preſent is the only Time we are ſure to enjoy; the only Time for the improvement of Virtue. *Boaſt not thy ſelf of to-morrow* (as the wiſe Man ſays) *ſeeing all Fleſh is as Graſs, and we know not what a Day may bring forth.* Let not then to-morrow's Proſpect, blot out to-day's Repentance; leſt what was threatned to the Children of *Iſrael*, whom the LORD had deliver'd from the *Egyptians*, from the *Amorites*, from the *Children of Ammon* and the *Philiſtines*, from the *Zidonians*, the *Amalekites* and the *Maonites*, be our Portion and Lot. That is, *that we ſhall cry unto the GODS whom we have ſerved, but they ſhall not avail us, in the Day of Diſtreſs.* Judges Ch. x. *v.* 11. 12, 13.

Proceed we then to the Third general Head, to ſhew (in proſecution of the latter Part of the Text) in theſe Words, *but the Word of the LORD endureth for ever*, 1ſt. *That tho' Man*

fade

fade as the Flower of the Field, yet the Word of GOD *contained in, and revealed by the Gospel, by which we are to regulate and govern our Actions, shall never be abolished, but remain thro' out all Generations.*

I take in these last Words of the Text, as they naturally lead me to speak of the excellency of the holy Scriptures; the right use, study and meditation whereof, is the best Means (seeing such is the frailty of human Nature) to adorn our most holy RELIGION, with a Life and Conversation agreeable thereto.

It is plain and evident, from all the transactions of Providence with Mankind, that he wou'd have us to be good and virtuous, and is resolved to bring all those that serve and obey him, to eternal Happiness by *Jesus Christ*. And in order hereunto, he has revealed this his gracious purpose and design for us, by his SON, and by others authorized by him, to declare it to the World.

Now this the Apostles have fully and entirely accomplish'd, in leaving, in the most plain and legible Characters, their pure and heavenly Doctrine, for the use and instruction of succeeding Generations: Together with a peculiar Narrative, and a more than common Relation, of the many

Miracles they wrought, to witneſs their Commiſſion from GOD, and convince the obſtinate and unbelieving. And theſe ſacred Records, ſo wiſely, ſo well attemper'd, ſo neatly adapted, that their variety ſo comprehends the ſeveral abilities and diſpoſitions of Men, that there is ſcarce any frame of Spirit a Man can be of, or condition he can be in, (notwithſtanding we are of ſo nice, ſo tender a Texture, that ſometimes the leaſt ſhock diſorders the whole Machine;) I ſay there is ſcarce any frame of Spirit a Man can be of, or condition he can be in, to which ſome Paſſage of Scripture, is not as patly and ſtrictly Applicable, as tho' it was deſign'd for him, or ſpoken unto him, as *Nathan* once *ſaid unto David, Thou art the Man.* 2 *Sam.* xii, 7. I ſay, theſe ſacred Records, our great and tremendous GOD (in ſpite of all the attempts made by our modern *Sectarians*, to ſully and Eclipſe the Glory of them) has kept inviolable, even until now. And this is cauſe ſufficient one would imagine, to perſuade Men to embrace a Doctrine ſo Æthereal and Divine; and undeniably much for the Happineſs and Advantage of the World. And if we reſolve to do GOD's bleſſed Will, ſo far as the ſacred Depoſitum, the venerable Order of the Goſpel ſhall guide and direct us, we ſhall very palpably diſcover, how every thing therein recommended to our Faith, ſhall abundantly conduce to the perfection of Man, and the Glory of GOD. For the holy Scriptures

moſt plainly demonſtrate unto us, and ſhall ever continue ſo to do, our Sin and our Duty, our Danger and GOD's great Mercy, and inexhauſtible Goodneſs, the beauty of Holineſs, and the terribleneſs of that Spirit, that works in the Children of Diſobedience; And if this, if all this, will not prevail with us to love GOD above all Things, and believe the Scriptures to be true, and that they ſhall continue to the end of the World, great reaſon have we to conclude that our Portion will be allotted with the Unbelievers, whoſe fate (O! terrible Words to utter) will be, to be caſt into thoſe terrible Flames *where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is never to be quenched.* 'Tis ſure a Motive, 'tis certainly a Principle, which muſt flow from nothing leſs than infidelity itſelf, which ſlights and undervalues thoſe illuſtrious Writings, which are a direct emanation from the eſſential and ſupreme Being; and of which the ſole and only Contents, concern no leſs than Man's everlaſting Miſery, or eternal Preſervation. As to their duration, 'tis plain they ſhall continue, as long as the Nations laſt, which are to be governed by them: For otherwiſe thoſe Words of our Saviour muſt be groundleſs and falſe, which is no leſs abſurd, than down right impious to ſuppoſe: *Verily I ſay unto you, till Heaven and Earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the Law, till all be fulfilled.* Matt. v. 18. *Heaven and Earth ſhall*

paſs away, but my Words ſhall not paſs away. Mark xiii. 31. I might further go on to demonſtrate this Head, but it being undeniably evinced by our LORD himſelf, I ſhall ſuperſede to urge any more Arguments for the Vindication of it, and proceed to the laſt particular,

Namely, To ſhew, 2. *That they that live agreeably to the holy Scriptures, ſhall obtain an everlaſting Crown of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And here, I think the only Method in order to obtain this bleſſed and deſireable end is, to apply our ſelves cloſely to them, as well in our private Retirement, as here in the more immediate preſence of GOD.

If we conſider GOD as the CREATOR and AUTHOR of our Being, and ſo likely to know the Frame, Texture, and Compoſition of our Nature, we ſhall ſoon be induced to believe that in thoſe Writings ſet forth and addreſs'd unto Men, he has employ'd very powerful and appropriated Means to work upon them and gain their Affections. If we diligently peruſe them, there is, (if I may ſo ſpeak) a kind of Heavenly Magick in many Paſſages to be found, highly ſuperior to all other Writings, and will not eaſily be better expreſs'd, than in the very Words of

the Scripture itſelf. *For the Word of God* (ſays it) *is quick and powerful, ſharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the Thoughts, and intents of the Heart.* Heb. iv. 12. Wherefore (as a famous Author obſerves) " that *Junius* as himſelf relates, " was converted from a kind of *Atheiſt*, to a " *Believer*, upon reading the firſt Chapter of " *St. John*; That a *Rabbi*, by his own Confeſ- " ſion was converted from the *Jewiſh*, to the " *Chriſtian Religion*, by reading the 53 *of Iſaiah*; " That *St. Auſtin* was changed from a Debau- " chee, (*i. e.* a Lew'd debauch'd Perſon,) in- " to a *Saint*, by that Paſſage of the 13*th* to " the *Romans* and the 13*th v.* And that ano- " ther devout Father of the Church (whoſe fear " had made him renounce his Faith) burſt out " publickly into Tears, upon the occaſional " reading of the 16*th v.* of the 50*th Pſalm*"; That all theſe Things, I ſay, ſhould happen, is not ſo much to be wonder'd at, as that thoſe Perſons who lead irregular and immoral Lives, are not by reading, and hearing read, unto them, thoſe ſacred Writings of both Teſtaments, wholly and entirely converted into good and ſincere Chriſtians §. Nay, ſo winning is the Majeſty of the Scripture, that many who have at firſt peruſed it out of mere curioſity, have at laſt

§ *See* BOYLE's *Style, de ſacris Script.* P. 242. 243. &c.

laſt, found themſelves engaged, and obliged to do it, out of pure Conſcience, and bounden Obligation. Juſt as *Zaccheus* climbing upon the ſycamore Branches, only to ſee our *Saviour* paſs by, by that Means became his *Proſelyte* and *Convert*, and entertained him joyfully at his Houſe.

And thus we plainly ſee, that the efficacy and virtue of the Scriptures, are ſo illuſtrious, powerful and great, that no one, one wou'd imagine, could ſcarce apply himſelf to them, and not daily grow better by the rules contained and recommended in them: Eſpecially when we conſider and believe that they come from the Hands of Almighty GOD, in the very ſame Terms, as they are deliver'd to us; as the eminent Apoſtle *St. Paul*, writing to the *Theſſalonians*, expreſsly declares. *That they received it not as the word of Men, but, as it is in Truth, the ſacred word of God.* 1 *Theſs.* ii. 13. The ſtudy of which Word, is like the raviſhing *Hallelujahs* of the bleſſed; 'Tis at once, a Duty, and a Pleaſure, an exerciſe and reward of Piety and Virtue.

Let us therefore ſeeing Life is but a Vapour, a Span, a blaſt of Wind, or a Shadow, uſe our utmoſt endeavours after the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures, as they are the only rule, whereby we are to govern and regulate our Faith and Actions, and beg that GOD may give a

bleſſing upon our devout ſtudy and meditation of them; And, as the *Royal Pſalmiſt* prays, *open our Eyes, that we may ſee the wondrous things contained in his law, and rejoice at them, as one that findeth great ſpoils.* Let us, when with the Apoſtles in the Mount, we contemplate *Moſes* and *Elias* talking with CHRIST, (I mean the Law and the Prophets ſymphonizing, or in melodious Harmony with the Goſpel) cry out, with *St. Peter, It is good for us to be here.* And with the Royal Pſalmiſt, *The commandments of the Lord are pure, and give light unto the Eyes; more to be deſired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; ſweeter alſo than honey, and the honeycomb: Moreover, by them is thy Servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great Reward.* Pſal. xix. 10, 11.

Having now gone through the ſeveral particulars, I propoſed to ſpeak to, I ſhou'd draw to a Concluſion, but muſt beg your Patience while I dwell a little upon the Character of the deceas'd, our very much Honour'd, and dearly beloved Brother; as not improper, at the preſent melancholy Solemnity.

And was it not, that the performance of my Duty forbids me that exceſs, I cou'd freely weep, with them that weep; but however *do* ſincerely Mourn with them that Mourn. And tho' we are not forbid the ſhedding of a penſive Tear, as

obeying

obeying the ſuggeſtions of Nature, and conſiſtent with the rules of decency on theſe and the like Occaſions, for the inexpreſſible loſs of a true departed Friend; Yet, ſays St. Paul, *we are not to ſorrow as Men without hope.* 1 Theſ. iv, 13.

And now if we may be allow'd to ſpeak of his excellent and great Qualities, we muſt firſt ſay, he was a Perſon univerſally beloved in his Life; and is now univerſally lamented in his Death: His Manners and Deportment at all Times, and in all Places, were to all Men, free, eaſy and obliging. Diſtant from every thing of formality and void of affectation. Rais'd by Birth and Quality, above the generality of Mankind, yet in Converſation level with all. One, of the greateſt Conſideration, and of the utmoſt Tenderneſs and Humanity. Eaſy of acceſs, and averſe to the formality of a long attendance. Choſe rather to poſtpone any Buſineſs of his own, than cauſe his inferiors to wait with too much ſubſerviency to him. A true Pattern of good Behaviour, and of good Works: Whoſe modeſty always engaged him rather to *do*, than to ſpeak of great Things, or boaſt of generous Actions. Of a remarkable tenderneſs to the Poor, and upon all occaſions, more ready to give than to receive. To thoſe whom Buſineſs, or Affection occaſioned to his Houſe, his Table

was

was always very ſplendidly furniſhed and freſh. *Narrow*, *Stingy*, or *Mean* Actions were his Scorn and Contempt. He had no *little*, no *artful*, no *ſelfiſh* Ends. A promiſe to a Friend he never forgot; but an Injury from a Foe, (tho' I believe he had as few of thoſe, as ever Man had in the World) he ſeemed ſcarce ever to remember. His Meekneſs, great Charity, and generous Conduct, will ever be admired, but I doubt, ſeldom be followed. Had any been guilty of an Offence, he would even prevent their aſking Pardon, by his aptneſs and haſte to forgive it. In ſhort, he had a great Mind, a generous Soul, and (I ſincerely believe) a good Conſcience. He lived in the profeſſion of, and dyed in the Chriſtian Faith. Such indeed, and ſo many were his excellent Qualities, that it wou'd be too much for a Sermon to recite. I am truly ſenſible, that to his Servants he was the very beſt of Maſters. To all his Tenants the moſt courteous and obliging Landlord. To an accompliſh'd Lady the moſt loving and endearing Spouſe: And to his beautiful Off-ſpring, the moſt tender and compaſſionate of all Parents. An obedient and dutiful Subject to the KING, and a true and ſincere lover of his COUNTRY. In ſhort, he was a Friend to all, and an Enemy to none.

And now what ſhall I ſay more?

Why

Why, was I to ſay all that I know, I cou'd ſpeak of innumerable great and generous Actions.

But why need I trouble my Auditory with repetitions of this kind, when his own Deeds will remain laſting Monuments of his Goodneſs and Hoſpitality, and the whole Country ecchoes and reſounds his Praiſe. Yet that Eſteem, that regard that is due to the Memory of ſo great, ſo obliging a Friend to thoſe he convers'd with, and ſo free, ſo willing a benefactor to others, very juſtly demands ſomething of this Nature at our Hands. But cou'd I pluck my quill from the Wing of a Cherubim, and have the Pen of a ready Writer; or cou'd I ſpeak with the tongues of Men and Angels, yet cou'd I not give that Encomium due to the Memory of that Man, whoſe (ſcarce to be parallel'd) pattern, ſhone with the moſt beautiful Works of *Hoſpitality*, *Liberality*, *Magnificence*, *Charity*, and what not? And now tho' the Scene of Death be drawn upon him, yet may I not ſay, our irreparable Loſs we hope, and is no doubt his greateſt Gain. Otherwiſe, were it poſſible with weeping to reſtore him to his former ſprightlineſs and vigour, there wou'd not be wanting a deluge of Tears. But tho' as ſhedding a Tear (as I ſaid before) for a true departed Friend, be agreeable to Chriſtianity, yet in this Caſe, we may be in danger of exceeding the bounds of Decency, by too much giving Way to Sorrow and Grief. Tho'

Tho' I own we cannot in due proportion to his Merits and Worth, and in conſideration of the want of him, ſufficiently lament the Death of ſo good, ſo dear a Friend, and ſo highly deſerving of all that can be ſaid in commemoration of him.

I cou'd further proceed upon this Occaſion; but as enlarging too far upon Characters (tho' even upon ſuch truly worthy Gentlemen) is neither giving any advantange to the Memory of the Dead, nor of ſo much Service to the Living, as on theſe Occaſions, to exhort them to conſider how frail, and ſubject to death human Nature is, I ſhall draw to a Concluſion, with an inference or two from the whole, and I have done.

If Man in his beſt Eſtate, even in the Flower of his Age, as the Apoſtle obſerves, *(all Fleſh is as Graſs, and all the Glory of Man, as the Flower of Graſs)* is but in a frail and fading Condition, and ever attended with many great and ſore Afflictions, why ſhou'd we pleaſe and vaunt ourſelves, in thoſe dalliances, which the beſt of Ages, can vouchſafe unto Mankind? Tho' all things now be calm in our Breaſts, yet we know not how ſoon a ſudden Storm may ariſe, and quaſh our Enjoyments. Youth with all their full blown Glories, are not exempt from Misfortunes,

fortunes, and the ſtroke of Death; how much leſs then, the decrepit, the feeble and the weak? Death is that mercileſs Tyrant, that ſweeps away whole Nations before it: It's deaf to the requeſt of old Age; regardleſs of the afflicted ſtate of the moſt tender Infant; tramples under Foot the moſt blooming Features; ſcorns the piteous out-cries of the moſt harmleſs Chriſtians, and brings down to the Earth, the Heads of the moſt lofty MONARCHS. It wounds with the ſame Hand, and lays low with its irreſiſtible Artillery, as well the KING upon the Throne, as the weather-beaten Shepherd in the Field. It regards neither Perſon nor Parts, for even they that ride in their triumphant Chariots, fall before its conquering Power. Neither nature nor art can ſecure us againſt it, nor all the Quarries in the Earth, wall us about with Safety: Thus ſo frail is the Life of Man, thus ſo invincible is the violence of Death.

All therefore that I have to add is, that the due and ſerious conſideration of theſe Things, may teach us all to renounce the vanities of the World, and ſo fit and prepare ourſelves for a better State, that we need not be ſtruck with Horror and Amazement, when the King of Terrors comes to ſummon us. And may that great and eternal God, in whoſe Hands are the Iſſues of Life and Death, ſtrengthen and enable

us

as by his Grace, to work the Works of Righteousness, while it is Day, before the Night comes, in which no Man can work: That so we may adorn our Lamps with precious Oyl, and (after the Pattern of the deceas'd) to the utmost of our Ability and Power, make our Souls shine with a divine Light. And may he of his infinite and tender Mercy, grant, that they who hear me this Day, together with the rest of his universal and apostolick Church, may, at the Day of Resurrection, enter with Joy and Triumph into the Heavenly Jerusalem, and there with the Angels and Arch-Angels, and all the glorified Armies above, sing ravishing and endless Hallelujahs, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

To which three Existences, in one Essence, three Persons, and one only wise God, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

5 OC 37

FINIS.